

# Open Space Principles

Open space in the West End Area serves the community by providing an experience of nature, and by making connections both visually and physically. Throughout the district, a variety of open spaces provides places for recreation, pathways for strolling and meeting neighbors, green lawns as calm oases for bustling institutions, and a link to the Charles River. Open space is a beloved element of the overall neighborhood's character.

Maximizing and preserving open space is a paramount interest, particularly for the residential community of the West End Area. Finding ways to better connect these open spaces to one another and to the rest of the city's network of sidewalks, parks, and plazas, and ensuring they are designed and maintained for a diversity of users, would further improve what is already a cherished component of the neighborhood.



*Well-maintained planting is a hallmark of Charles River Park.*



### Charles River Park

- Maintain and enhance Thoreau Path as the major pedestrian connector within Charles River Park.
- Create more visible and pleasant pedestrian pathways that connect Thoreau Path with surrounding streets, MBTA stations, and the Charles River Esplanade.
- Take advantage of the intersections of pathways to create places for sitting and gathering.
- Ensure that the current image of the residential area remains (the arrangement of walking paths, lawns, small plazas, planted areas, recreational courts, and playgrounds), and that any new open spaces are designed to complement the characteristics of the existing open space.
- Continue the high level of maintenance of the landscape throughout the West End Area.
- Design open space to take advantage of visual links to other neighborhoods thereby creating a sense of connection to the city as a whole.

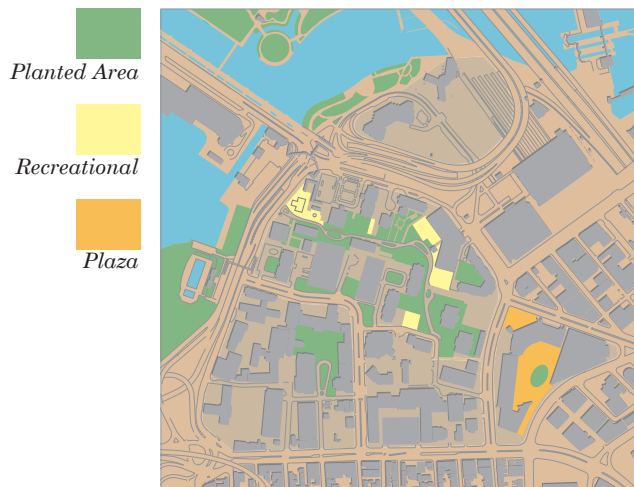


### Charles River Plaza Area

- Ensure that streets and sidewalks, as special types of open spaces, serve as connectors for pedestrians between the sub-areas and the surrounding city.
- Design attractive sidewalks that encourage walking by including street trees, lighting and other amenities. Provide surfaces that are friendly to all pedestrians, including those with disabilities.



*The Bulfinch Lawn at MGH offers a quiet oasis.*



*Existing and under-construction open space and recreation facilities in the West End Area*

### *Massachusetts General Hospital Campus*

- Make the Bulfinch Lawn more accessible by creating inviting connections from the surrounding neighborhood.



### *Nashua Street Area*

- Design Nashua Street and connections to it to encourage pedestrian activity, with wide sidewalks, safe crosswalks, street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting and active ground-floor uses. Continue this treatment to Causeway Street when the Green Line viaduct is removed.
- Provide safe, attractive and visible pedestrian connections to the new Nashua Street Park and other open spaces being developed in the lower Charles River Basin to ensure that they become part of the city's open space network.

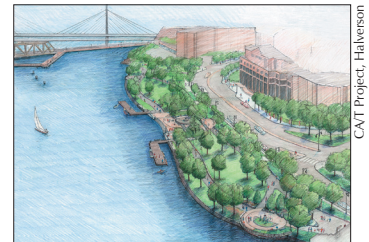


### *Lindemann Center & Brooke Court House*

- Encourage greater use of the pedestrian connections between the green space in the Lindemann Center plaza and the surrounding streets.
- Restore to open space use and preserve the plaza at the intersection of Merrimac and Stanford streets (thereby removing the parking); or, preserve for community-oriented retail.



## Open Space Principles



C&T Project, Halverson

*The new Nashua Street Park, currently under construction, will extend the Charles River Basin park system.*



*A green oasis lies in the middle of the Lindemann Center.*

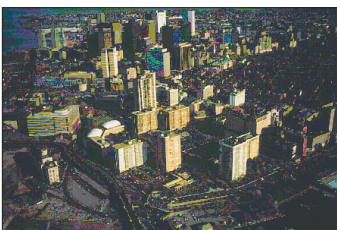
# Community Character Principles

The West End Area's distinctive character is derived both from physical features and from human qualities. On the physical side, Charles River Park's "towers in the park" urban design style, a hallmark of Modernism, contributes to its uniqueness within Boston and to the attraction many residents feel for the area. The large-scale blocks, constrained by the regional transportation infrastructure on the north and west sides, identify this area as a product of 20<sup>th</sup> century planning and the urban renewal era. World-class medical institutions established the surrounding historic urban setting, and offer access to a multitude of jobs and top-quality health care to residents and business people.

Socially, the West End Area is a desirable place for people to live, work, and visit. It is a safe and welcoming neighborhood, offering a variety of building types and heights in the residential community. The diversity of age, income and ethnicity of residents as well as the sense of a stable and affordable community are highly valued attributes that should be respected and preserved.



*Small-scale residential townhouses can be found among the taller buildings in Charles River Park, creating a diversity in scale and type of housing stock.*



*The scale of the buildings and blocks in the West End Area are a major component of the area's character.*



### Charles River Park

- Respect the established character of the residential area and recognize its historic relevance.
- Introduce new housing as townhouses, at the scale of the Back Bay or historic West End (see Workshop section, starting page 21, for further elaboration), that complement the existing towers.
- Maintain the high level of public safety within the neighborhood.



### Charles River Plaza Area

- Screen parking from the street with active retail or other uses.



### Massachusetts General Hospital Campus

- Increase appropriate visual and physical access into the MGH campus by developing more active and inviting streets, public ways, and walkways, with frequent building entrances, retail and service uses along the streets, and appropriate signage.
- Use street trees and other streetscape amenities to soften blank or inactive building facades.
- Place loading facilities off major streets and enclose them to screen unwanted views.



*The large blocks in the West End Area create a focus of activity at the center of the block. In other neighborhoods, such as Beacon Hill and the North End, the activity is more at the edge of the block.*

### *Nashua Street Area*

- Develop the Nashua Street area as an extension of the West End Area and a connection to the Bulfinch Triangle and Nashua Street Park area, through compatible land uses and strong pedestrian connections.
- Create a new pedestrian environment along Martha Road that replaces the car-oriented look of driveways, drop-offs and interrupted sidewalks.
- Utilize street trees and other landscape amenities to screen the Green Line viaduct and highway ramps along Martha Road.
- Locate height and density appropriate to the North Station transit hub location, while limiting impacts to the existing residential areas.

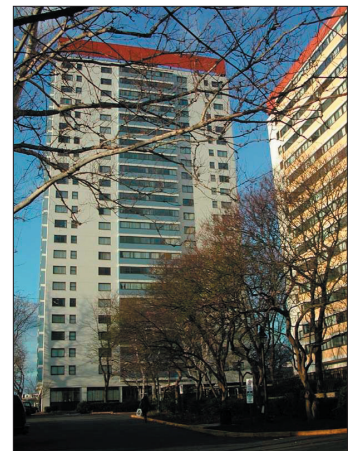


### *Lindemann Center & Brooke Court House*

- Create more interactive building edges with frequent entrances (including reopening entrances that have been closed) and retail or service uses.
- Use street trees and other landscape amenities to improve the pedestrian environment along inactive building facades, especially along Staniford Street.



## Community Character Principles



*Many West End Area residents enjoy high-rise living.*



# Transportation & Pedestrian Circulation Principles

## II Planning Principles

A good transportation network accommodates all modes of transportation and integrates them in ways that are safe, efficient and that contribute to the overall environment for those who live, visit and work in an area. The West End Area is fortunate to be served by major public transit lines and to have a well-used existing pedestrian network, as well as regional roadway connections. Maintaining the area's excellent and integrated transportation systems and providing a safe and enjoyable pedestrian environment is key to its continued desirability. Strategies that can better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and the car—on streets, highways and in parking—can alleviate specific traffic concerns in the community, and provide strong links to surrounding neighborhoods.



*Successful streets balance the needs of pedestrians and vehicles.*



*This gateway on Boylston Street transforms a simple path between buildings to suggest this is an entry to something special.*



### Charles River Park

- Accommodate vehicles in ways that improve the pedestrian-oriented environment.
- Expand and enhance the walkways that connect Thoreau Path with the surrounding streets and neighborhoods.
- Guide visitors through the area with landscape features, clear routes to building entrances and appropriate signage.
- Provide clearer, safer and more pedestrian-friendly connections to Charles Street, Science Park and North Station MBTA stations.
- Provide a means of traffic calming on Cardinal O'Connell Way to reduce traffic speed and increase pedestrian safety.



### Charles River Plaza Area

- Create more convenient, safe and attractive pedestrian routes between the retail services in Charles River Plaza and the residential areas.



### Massachusetts General Hospital Campus

- Create connections between pedestrian pathways in Charles River Park and the public circulation through the campus. Such connections include from Thoreau Path to the Charles/MGH Red Line Station and from the Esplanade to Blossom Street.

### Transportation & Pedestrian Circulation Principles

- Operate city streets in the MGH area to encourage efficient vehicular circulation and easy access to the regional network.
- Provide signs to orient drivers and pedestrians to, from, and within the MGH campus.

#### *Nashua Street Area*

- Provide safe and attractive pedestrian connections between the Nashua Street area and Charles River Park at Leverett Circle, and across Lomasney Way between Charles River Park and North Station.
- Create a clear pedestrian path from North Station to Charles River Park, and into the MGH campus.
- Encourage the MBTA to upgrade Science Park Station, providing handicapped access and utilizing the pedestrian bridge as a connection between Nashua Street and Charles River Park.



*Thoreau Path forms a central pedestrian spine through Charles River Park.*

#### *Lindemann Center & Brooke Court House*

- Improve the existing pedestrian paths to encourage walking through the Lindemann plaza, thereby connecting Government Center with the Esplanade and breaking down the “super block” quality of the West End Area.
- Encourage the use of signage to aid pedestrian access.



*The reconstruction of Charles Street station will enhance the image and functionality of public transit in the West End Area.*

# Land Use Principles

### LAND USE APPROACH

A mix of uses and the introduction of community amenities could benefit the neighborhood

The proximity of internationally-renowned medical facilities with a rather dense residential community and the quality of being surrounded by major transportation infrastructure at the edge of a vibrant downtown are the dominant land use characteristics of the West End Area. Each type of land use in the area—residential, institutional, commercial, recreational—tends to be concentrated and somewhat separated from other uses. There is a relatively small amount of “mixed-use,” and this occurs only in certain parts of the neighborhood.

Two schools of thought inform discussions about land use in the West End Area. One is interest in keeping land uses separate. Yet it has also been suggested that the introduction of a more “mixed” quality, done sensitively, could be beneficial to the livability of the area. For example, it is generally believed that residents and workers in the neighborhood could be supported by additional community service centers, affordable housing, community-oriented retail and cultural uses.

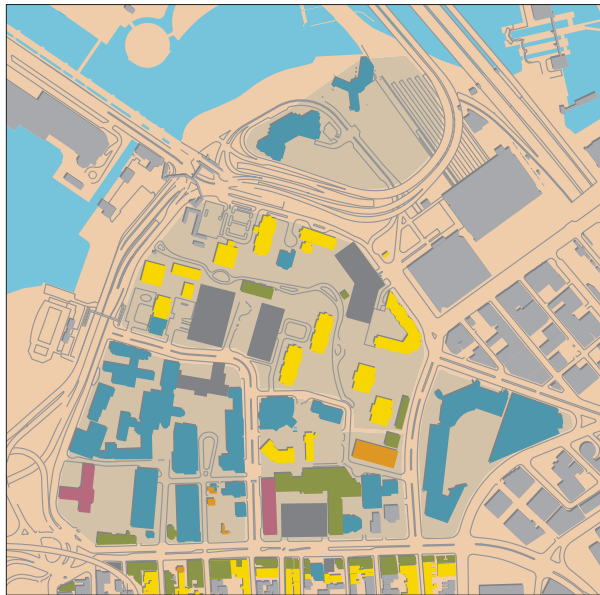


*Active uses at the ground level help enliven the street creating an inviting atmosphere.*



### *Charles River Park*

- Encourage appropriately-sized restaurants and retail uses to enliven the neighborhood and support residents.
- Maintain the character and accessibility of open space in the neighborhood.
- Maintain cohesive residential quality.
- Maintain a range of residential unit types that will support a diverse population in the neighborhood.
- Utilize opportunities to replace surface and above-grade parking with other uses.
- Ensure that any new residential development is designed in locations and scales that respect and complement the established arrangement of buildings and open space.
- Encourage community facilities that serve the neighborhood.



Ground-Level Land Use

- Residential
- Commercial-office
- Commercial-retail
- Institutional
- Hotel
- Parking

## Land Use Principles

### *Charles River Plaza Area*

- Line streets and public ways with uses that promote activity, such as shops, restaurants, and public gathering spaces.
- Replace the parking facing Cambridge Street with active uses.



### *Massachusetts General Hospital Campus*

- Enliven the sidewalks along Blossom Street and Cambridge Street with appropriate community-friendly uses, activities and streetscape elements.



### *Nashua Street Area*

- Maximize development opportunities in the Nashua Street area, especially for residential uses, and organize land uses to extend the West End Area neighborhood.
- Encourage mixed-use development in the area with active ground-floor uses as appropriate.
- Expand residential uses into the Nashua Street area.



### *Lindemann Center & Brooke Court House*

- Encourage the State to incorporate community-friendly facilities in any new reuse or redevelopment plans.



*New housing in the West End Area should include a variety of building forms and provide affordable housing opportunities.*



# Community Facilities Principles

Convenient access to goods and services is an important measure of the livability—the quality of life—of a neighborhood. The ability to walk to a grocery store, a restaurant, recreational facilities, a health club, school, or day-care center and to have a variety of shops and services to choose from, make a neighborhood a desirable place to live, work and conduct business. The West End Area has a number of establishments providing retail, public safety and social services to those who live and work in the neighborhood. As the area grows and develops, the location and provision of appropriate community facilities will ensure its continued livability.



*J. Pace & Sons grocery and produce establishment within Charles River Park adds vitality while providing important services to the neighborhood.*



### *Charles River Park*

- Locate civic spaces and community services in places that are accessible by walking from Thoreau Path and other major pedestrian routes.
- Provide adequate meeting space, publicly-accessible recreational facilities, and community services.



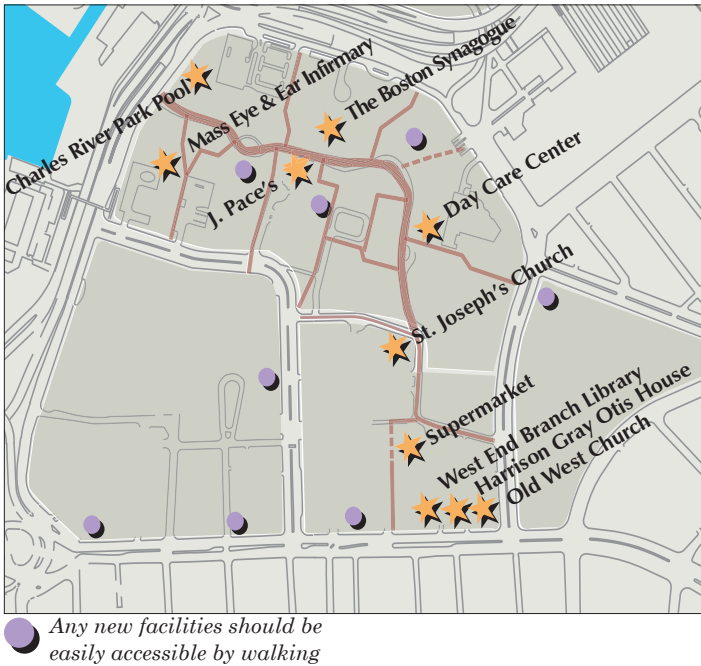
### *Charles River Plaza Area*

- Maintain this existing center of neighborhood retail services and make it more accessible by creating stronger pedestrian connections to Charles River Park and onto Cambridge Street.



### *Massachusetts General Hospital Campus*

- Locate MGH services that are available to the public in places that are easy to get to for residents and visitors in the neighborhood, such as along Cambridge and Blossom streets.



*The community facilities existing within the West End Area supply goods and services to the area's residents and visitors, and are easily accessible by pedestrians.*

## Community Facilities Principles

### Nashua Street Area

- Include additional community facilities and housing as new development occurs in the Nashua Street area—to serve the new workers and residents in the neighborhood.
- Use community facilities as one means of creating an active and vibrant street-level environment.

### Lindemann Center & Brooke Court House

- Encourage the state to be an equal partner in the neighborhood by incorporating publicly accessible facilities in any new development planning.



*Public safety facilities, such as fire and police stations, must be an integral part of community planning.*

